

***Campbell Union School District: CDS 43-69393***

**PROPOSAL ABSTRACT: SHERMAN OAKS**

*Sherman Oaks School, a community lighthouse illuminating visions of the future, guides all learners on a journey as they celebrate today and dream about tomorrow!*

Sherman Oaks opened this fall, but we have been planning our program since 1993. We visited school sites recognized for progressive architectural design and/or constructivist instructional programs; interviewed top think-tank corporate officials; read multidisciplinary research and consulted with educational theorists and practitioners regarding state-of-the-art pedagogical applications respective to our community, our buildings . . . our vision. Beginning with our first retreat over the summer of 1996, the Sherman Oaks staff identified core values and norms that continue to carry us as we are now as we complete our first year:

<b><u>Core Values</u></b>	<b><u>Norms</u></b>
• <b><i>Teamwork</i></b>	<b><i>Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.</i></b>
• <b><i>Creativity</i></b>	<b><i>Results matter.</i></b>
• <b><i>Integrity</i></b>	<b><i>Think like a kid.</i></b>
• <b><i>Knowledge</i></b>	<b><i>Yakety-yak, DO talk back!</i></b>
• <b><i>Achievement</i></b>	<b><i>Be the hundredth monkey--always remember the power of one.</i></b>
• <b><i>Fun</i></b>	<b><i>Think and act beyond boundaries. Ask “why not?”</i></b>

The planning and teamwork paid off. Sherman Oaks has received several awards and honors of distinction--within just seven months of opening our doors:

- California Distinguished School
- Bay Area School Reform Collaborative designee for: Leadership, Technology and School/University Partnership initiatives
- Partnership with Partners in School Innovation/AmeriCorps
- Partnership with the City of San Jose for after-school programs
- Walter J. Johnson, Noyce Foundation and Quantum Corporation literacy grants
- Hewlett-Packard Company's technology grant (two awards)
- Model site for Willard Daggett's International Center for Leadership in Education

With the political climate shifting towards back-to-basics, mandatory retention, standardized tests, English-only instruction, reduced and controlled staff development, vouchers, etc. we may wind up standing alone, but we are committed towards challenging that movement. We, the educational community, need to produce proven models of instruction that can counter the current distrust of legislators and frustration of parents. The problems associated with at-risk families are clearly evident in our students. Transiency rates, absenteeism, low achievement, and disciplinary problems plague our children. *We are beating the odds!*. Sherman Oaks is a project like no other -- we designed the program based on the profile of our community, had the building constructed to reflect the program, and hired the staff willing to implement the program. The caveat -- it's working! In reading alone, we went from a school-wide baseline of 22% to 62% -- a 40% gain in one year. Now, we are ready to take a **BOLDER** step: become the first charter school in Santa Clara County.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Proposal Abstract	1
Table of Contents	3-6
I. Sherman Oaks Education Vision	3
A. Baseline Information	3
B. Education Vision	3
II. Description of Grant Project Goals and Activities	7-13
A. Grant Project Goals and Objectives	7
B. Identification of Planning Needs	7
1. Educational Capacity	7
2. Business and Organizational Management Capacity	9
3. Collaboration and Networking Strategies	10
4. Overall Program Evaluation	12
C. Support for Getting the Charter School Petition Circulated	13
1. Specific Activities and Work to be Done	13
2. Justification for Use of Grant Funds	13
III. Self-Assessment and Procedures for Monitoring Progress Towards	14
Completion of the Charter Proposal	14
Appendix F. Budget Sheet and Narrative -- Proposed Expenditures	15
Appendix C. Application Checklist	17

## I. SHERMAN OAKS EDUCATION VISION

### A. Baseline Information

→ *Demographic characteristics and performance levels of the students*

→ *Communities in which our students live*

Sherman Oaks is a brand new K-4 elementary school that just opened last September with 521 students. Thirteen languages are spoken at Sherman Oaks with 49% speaking a primary language other than English. 75% of our students are children of color and 64% are from families living in poverty. Our school serves two distinct neighborhoods: the RoseGlen neighborhood which incorporates 800 low-income apartment complexes and the Sherman Oaks subdivision of 120 single-family dwellings. While single dwelling homes comprise part of our geographic area, the majority of the area is dedicated to high-density, low-cost housing -- many overseen by classic slumlords and absentee property owners. The problems associated with at-risk families are clearly evident in our students.

Sherman Oaks staff have given District assessments in reading, writing, and mathematics. These base-line results have been analyzed by grade level and cross-grade level articulation teams with annual achievement targets set which will be measured by the spring round of assessments: Students on or above current grade level in **reading**: 22%

Students on or above grade level in **writing**: 20%

Students on or above grade level in **mathematics**: 2% (Computation) and 7% (problem-solving)

To enjoy a virtual tour of our school, check out our on-line webmagazine, *Dreamweaver*, at <http://www.campbellusd.k12.ca.us/Soaks/Dreamweaver/index.html>.

### B. Educational Vision

→ *Innovative strategies and proven methods of learning and teaching*

→ *Clear and measurable outcomes for student performance*

→ *Comprehensive student assessment program aligned with the school's program/outcomes*

→ *Professional development tailored for school reform and restructuring*

→ *Experience and knowledge of people involved in this area*

Commissioned to stand as a lighthouse school serving as a model of progressive practices for the educational community, the planning for the fall 1997 opening of Sherman Oaks began in 1993. Three perimeters were established by the District Superintendent: Sherman Oaks would (1) Serve the entire community, (2) Focus on early childhood education and literacy, and (3) Serve as a training site for emerging instructional strategies. A broad-based committee of educators, parents, and community members from the public and private sector met over the course of two years, from 1993 to 1995: visiting school sites across the nation that are recognized for progressive architectural design and/or constructivist instructional programs; interviewing top think-tank corporate officials to elicit essential foundation skills for professionals of the 21st century; reading multidisciplinary research that analyzes organizational systems conducive to building leadership capacity at all operational levels; and, consulting with educational theorists and practitioners regarding state-of-the-art pedagogical applications respective to our community, our buildings . . . our vision.

Eliminating the institutional nature of our buildings guided the architectural design so that when children or adults walk through our doors, the message is *Welcome Home*. Clusters of classrooms ring a commons area called the *Great Room* which leads to gardens and kitchens. Restrooms are jointly shared by children and adults. The cafeteria was traded in for increased square footage for instruction--children benefit from learning environments 1/3 larger than traditional classrooms.

The principal was appointed in 1995 and the core teaching staff were hired in the spring of 1996 after a rigorous screening process that included the applicants working in teams to problem-solve realistic organizational and learning environment issues. While they worked within their teams they were closely evaluated by a panel of administrators, parents, university professors and teaching peers for creativity, communication and personal interaction characteristics. A teaching staff of seventeen teachers were selected to join the principal as key leaders for the Sherman Oaks project. From the core staff of 17, we have grown to 24. All staff members have received specialized training in literacy, technology, student management, community engagement and curriculum development. More importantly, every teacher at Sherman Oaks competed to be part of the mission. The teaching staff is supplemented and supported by a Literacy Coordinator, special education resource teacher, student services psychologist, community liaison and recreation leaders.

Our School Plan reflects clear and comprehensive design features that were crafted through mutual dialogue with our community, our partners, and our staff. Several key researchers influence our work:

School Reform: Michael Fullen, Andy Hargreaves, Thomas J. Sergiovanni, Roland Barth and Debrah Meier.

Curriculum and Instruction: Margaret Moustafa, Donald Bear, Marcia Invernizzi, Shane Templeton, and Francine Johnston, L.S. Vygotsky, Stephen Krashen, Diane Snowball, Jacqueline and Martin Brooks and Robert Calfee, Andrea Butler.

School Climate: Bob Strachota, Ruth Charney, and David W. and Roger T. Johnson.

School Governance: Jo and Joseph Blase and Seymour B. Sarason.

Our standards encompass intellectual, ethical and social development in five *Essential Learnings: Knowledge, Communication, Teamwork, Ethics, and Courage*. These five *Essential Learnings* are statements that provide standards by which our success will be evaluated; they drive the purpose, goals, norms, culture, curriculum, instructional strategies, and assessment protocols of Sherman Oaks and are used to determine what will best prepare our students for the future. A three level rubric further describes each category.

- Teamwork: Learners will demonstrate responsible, respectful citizenship and a spirit of service towards their families, community and our global village.
- Knowledge: Learners will engage in a rigorous academic program to construct meaning and creatively apply that meaning to relevant, real-life settings and issues that will enrich their lives, their families and their diverse community.
- Ethics: Learners will be responsible, honest and loyal and take a leadership role in promoting these values amongst their peers and families and within their diverse community.
- Communication: Learners will use all forms of media to understand and convey powerful ideas and information within their families, community and our global village.
- Courage: Learners will be resourceful, compassionate, relentless and action-oriented risk takers who confront and overcome their fears.

Sherman Oaks was designed with state-of-the-art technology as a foundation for learning. Our networking infrastructure was designed so that all classrooms have three data, voice and video drops with a direct connection to Internet based on a District designed plan funded through a community bond measure. There are telephones in every room along with a connection to each school in the district, the district office and the County Office of Education through T1 lines. Each classroom has a multimedia teacher workstation with presentation software that interfaces with a large screen monitor and VCR plus two to three student workstations with Internet access. The three Great Rooms have clusters of networked computers where students can work on educational software, perform word processing, or go on-line to the Internet. Two scanners and two laser disc players are available in the school and there is one video camera per every two classrooms. E-mail links every staff member in the school as well as with teachers at all other schools in our district. Chat-room formats are turned to amongst Sherman Oaks staff to brainstorm, prioritize, and problem-solve logistical issues. Since the onset of e-mail, staff meetings are easily reserved for discussions that focus on issues of merit. Extensive training was offered to each staff member through the District Technology Training program. “*Cadets*” make a 50 hour commitment (teacher productivity; multimedia; integrating technology) and *Star Techs*” make a 150 hour commitment and receive a *Technology Certificate* from UCSC and a supplemental credential authorization. On the Sherman Oaks faculty are ten *Cadets* and five *Star Techs*.

Sherman Oaks students are supported in their efforts to acquire another language and prepare for the challenges of tomorrow through our *Dual Immersion Program*. Dual immersion is the process by which students acquire a second language by being completely immersed in it for a portion of the day. They have the opportunity to learn in an ethnically and linguistically rich environment while being exposed to a second language that is presented to them in a meaningful and natural way. Dual immersion research shows impressive development of both fluency in the second language and high academic achievement, usually above grade level for students in these programs. For students who choose to receive instruction in an English-only environment or for whom we do not have native speakers (languages other than English and Spanish), all staff members are CLAD-certificated and augment instruction with appropriate sheltering techniques.

“Looping” is a program perimeter whereby our teachers will keep students for two years allowing for continuity and stability for our students. A teacher will keep his or her students for the three primary years, K-2, and another teacher will keep the students for the intermediate grades, 3-4. From the research and past experience, we feel that this practice gives our student a three month headstart when returning from the summer break. Students pick right up where they left off and don’t spend any time learning logistics, schedules, and classroom expectations. Teachers don’t have to spend time getting acquainted with the students or spending several weeks in review and assessment.

We hope you are beginning to understand why Sherman Oaks is a school like none other. Parents and teachers together drafted our mission statement and we aim to live up to our billing:

Sherman Oaks School, a community lighthouse illuminating visions of the future, guides all learners on a journey as they celebrate today and dream about tomorrow!

In just one year we have hosted visitors from around the country who are interested in our innovative program. A key feature of high interest is our master schedule which includes a 90

minute block of time built into the school day which allows teachers to have lunch and plan together. Students are supervised by recreation leaders during this 90 minute period. Our project-based curriculum, dual immersion language program, unique architectural features and elite staff have combined to bring us several awards and honors over our first seven months of operation:

- California Distinguished School
- Bay Area School Reform Collaborative designee for: Leadership, Technology and School/University Partnership initiatives (the only school in the Bay Area selected to participate in all three initiatives)
- Partnership with Partners in School Innovation/AmeriCorps (one of only seven schools selected in the Bay Area to work with this reform organization)
- Partnership with the City of San Jose for after-school programs
- Walter Johnson literacy grant
- Quantum Corporation literacy grant
- Noyce Foundation literacy grant
- Hewlett-Packard Company's technology grant (two awards)
- Model site for Willard Daggett's International Center for Leadership in Education (one model site for ICLE in the country)

Why do we need to become a charter school? Here are some quotes from District officials recorded over the last 12 months:

1. "We can't let you look that much different from the other schools."
2. "I can't come up with a reason to say no, but let me think about it."
3. "If we let you do it that way, everyone will want to!"
4. "Why should your school be the only one to do things right?"
5. "This isn't about students."
6. "If I do that for you, it will make other schools unhappy."
7. "We anticipated your request and the answer is no."
8. "I hope my parents don't find out about your longer day, because it will make all of us look bad."
9. "Why does your school always ask for special treatment?"
10. "You will have to rethink your program."

We are in a constant struggle with Personnel, Business Services, Special Programs, and Instructional Services. What we currently offer to children and families is already "different" from every other school in the district. If we don't find a way to establish our independence from District and State interference, that uniqueness will cease. The pressure to conform is a steady drum beat -- from the District, from surrounding schools, from the different unions, and from the State. We resist these pressures as best we can, but with a few more critical decisions by Personnel (to transfer staff in and out, bypassing the competitive process we established) and by Business Services (to reduce our funding), by Instructional Services (to change our schedule), by the State (to require English-only instruction, to test second language students in English) -- we won't be a school "*like none other*" -- we will be a school just like *all others*.

## II. Description of Grant Project Goals and Activities for Approval of a Charter Proposal

### A. Grant Project Goals and Objectives

By the end of school year 1998-99, we want to become the first charter school in Santa Clara County. The individuals responsible for meeting our goal will be the Principal, staff and governance council of Sherman Oaks.

### B. Identification of Planning Needs for the Development of an Effective School

#### 1. Educational Capacity

##### → *Plans for developing innovative strategies and proven methods of teaching and learning*

Our focused effort at Sherman Oaks is to deepen our understanding and working knowledge of constructivist learning so that children do not just receive content but are called upon to create and invent meaning within every cognitive system they encounter. Powerful learning for all students is our goal. Integrated curriculum, block scheduling, customized assessment protocols, and meaningful parent and community participation is the means. We examined the research around a constructivist pedagogy and have framed our focus accordingly.

Constructivism is not a theory about teaching. It is a theory about knowledge and learning. There are five overarching principles of a constructivist pedagogy: (1) posing problems of emerging relevance to learners; (2) structuring learning around “big ideas” or primary concepts; (3) seeking and valuing students’ points of view; (4) adapting curriculum to address students’ suppositions; and (5) assessing student learning in the context of teaching. Constructivist teaching practices help learners to internalize and reshape, or transform, new information. Transformation occurs through the creation of new understandings that result from the emergence of new cognitive structures. Deep understanding, not imitative behavior is the goal.

A model of constructivist learning reflect these key attributes:

- **Child-centered:** the best starting point for schooling is kids’ real interests; investigating students’ own questions should always take precedence over studying arbitrary content.
- **Experiential:** active, hands-on, concrete experiences is the most powerful form of learning.
- **Reflective:** ample opportunities for learners to look back, to reflect, and to debrief must be provided.
- **Authentic:** real, rich, complex ideas and materials are at the heart of the curriculum.
- **Holistic:** children learn best when they encounter whole, real ideas, events, and materials in purposeful context and not by studying sub-parts isolated from actual use.
- **Social:** learning is interactional and socially constructed, keeping kids working together in a variety of different groupings.
- **Collaborative:** cooperative learning activities tap the social power of learning.
- **Democratic:** the classroom is a model community where students learn what they live as citizens of the school and the greater community.
- **Cognitive:** the most powerful learning comes from developing true understanding of concepts and higher order thinking associated with various fields of inquiry.
- **Developmental:** schooling fits its activities to the developmental level of children and avoids rigid compartmentalization; children do not just receive content; they recreate and reinvent within the cognitive systems they encounter.
- **Challenging:** students learn best when faced with genuine challenges, choices and responsibility in their own learning.

A constructivist framework challenges teachers to create environments in which they and their students are encouraged to think and explore. This is a formidable challenge. We believe that the principals of constructivist learning are rooted in pedagogical pragmatism and insight about cognition that will prepare students to live successfully and work productively into the next century. If John Dewey were alive, he would most certainly speak highly of our progressive philosophy and practices.

**→Plans to develop clear and measurable outcomes for student performance**

Assessments are both formative and summative, holistic and standardized, narrative and norm-referenced: we need our students to be flexible enough to demonstrate mastery when measured against multiple measures. We believe in an approach to assessment that *both* improves learning and provides assurances of accountability. Our Data Collection Strategies include: Standardized test scores (SAT/9, SABE), Running Records, Concepts of Print, Alternate Rankings, and holistic assessments in reading, writing and math (given fall and spring). Second language learners who are being served in our bilingual classes (we have a bilingual Spanish/English class at each grade level) are tested in their native language. All ELD students are tested by the LAS and SOLOM batteries as appropriate, upon enrollment and annually thereafter. Teachers analyze the student achievement data and set personal and grade level goals for student progress and mastery.

**→Plans to develop comprehensive student assessment program aligned to school mission**

In addition to the summative data listed above, we have set a three-year time-line for designing and embedding performance tasks--individual and group-- in the curriculum. We organize our curriculum on a trimester system spotlighting three content areas: social science, math and science. We are currently piloting a science unit and will be spending this summer analyzing the pilot and designing appropriate performance tasks for each grade level, K-4. Over the next two years we will develop a similar curriculum strand for social science and math. These performance tasks are evaluated by a cross-grade level team of colleagues who apply a rubric to the student projects. Currently, students are involved in self-assessment through weekly contracts, portfolios in which they analyze their own work, two student-led conferences per year with parents, daily “plan, do, and review” processes, Writer’s Workshop with self and peer editing, and three Exhibition Evenings a year where students demonstrate their learning.

**→Plans and resources to develop professional development tailored for school reform**

We look at Sherman Oaks as a model learning community that will ultimately act as a bridge in the long process of institutional change. Andy Hargreaves in *Rethinking Educational Change* (ASCD Yearbook, 1997) argues for a new approach to educational change: reculturing rather than restructuring. He writes, “We were concerned not with how teachers should commit to other people’s changes but with how we might make schools into the kinds of places that stimulate and support teachers to make changes themselves. How teachers work with teachers affects how well they work with their students.” Hargreaves goes on to make a convincing argument, supported by Michael Fullen, that developing collaborative working relationships within the walls of schools and beyond--bring community into the relationship web. Sherman Oaks makes it a priority to keep bringing all stakeholders together for meaningful, thoughtful, and analytical conversations focusing on our mission. Our staff are a blend of district-identified



*Mentors* (task: working with new teachers), university-identified *Master Teachers* (task: supervise preservice teachers), *Webmasters* (task: coach peers in technology applications for instruction), & *Designated Teachers* (task: provide ongoing support for second language programs). Four teachers are candidates in the *Masters in Teacher Leadership* program which is held at Sherman Oaks. The principal of Sherman Oaks teaches the “Leadership in the Community” class for this graduate program. While some staff members have formalized leadership roles, all staff members take their role as teacher and teacher-leader seriously. Staff meetings are facilitated by teachers who have strengths or experience in certain areas. For instance, a meeting prior to parent conferences was facilitated by two teachers who expressed a strong interest in student-directed conferences. Another meeting on computerized report cards was organized and facilitated by three teachers who attended the training workshop and have special expertise in technology. A Literacy Class is taught on Mondays by a staff member who sought out advanced training from Ohio State University to become a site Literacy Coordinator. Another teacher is a national “Box-It and Bag-It” trainer for this hands-on approach to math. Our bilingual teachers have studied for two consecutive summers in a Multi-Cultural Institute taught by nationally known university professors. Professional journals are made available to the teaching staff. “*Point-Counterpoint*” is an occasional staff development approach where an article is brought forth for debate that features content of very different educational viewpoints than our own. The debates those articles inspire help us keep an open mind and prepare for dialogues with community members that most certainly will support some of those differing positions. Our ultimate goal is to become a community of learners who continue to examine evidence and research that will improve student achievement by bringing best practices of curriculum and instruction to our students.

## **2. The Business and Organizational Management Capacity of the School**

**→Comprehensive design for effective school functioning which supports educational vision**

**→Development of governance and management structures**

We have a broad-based governance council in place which consists of 21 elected members from various constituencies: parents, staff and community members. This council meets monthly to discuss and take action on matters pertaining to the program, policies and budget of Sherman Oaks. One representative on the governance council serves as a liaison to our Bilingual Advisory Committee, a parent group that represents the interests of our non-English speaking children. The Bilingual Advisory Committee meets monthly. To ensure that our governance council is a good match for 21st century organizational management, we have approached the *Nonprofit Development Center of San Jose* for technical assistance in reviewing our organizational systems and governance protocols.

**→Activities to develop a proposed budget that would demonstrate fiscal viability**

**→Location of and plans for the maintenance of school facilities**

As a conversion school, we will explore several different approaches to fiscal accounting: the “expenditure-based” approach, the “revenue” approach and the “average daily attendance” approach. We understand that the expenditure-based approach is more frequently used with “conversion” charter schools which would allow us to remain closely aligned with our district for many programs and services (e.g., payroll, insurance, facilities maintenance, etc.). We may opt to continue to receive all or nearly all district-level resources as if we were continuing as a district school or we may opt to “cash-out” of others. We are eligible to receive the following

categorical funds: Economic Impact Aid (EIA), School Improvement Program (SIP), Gifted and Talented (GATE), Instructional Materials, Mentor Teaching, Title I, Title II, and Title 7, Drug and Alcohol Education (DATE), Tobacco Education (TUPE), Class Size Reduction, Lottery and any One-Time monies allocated by the state. We are also the recipients of two grants from the Bay Area School Reform Collaborative for technology (\$50,000 per year for four years) and leadership (\$75,000 per year for four years). AB 544 (Lempert, D-Palo Alto), signed into law on May 8 by Governor Wilson, entitles charter schools to receive funding directly from the state and to a "fair share" of virtually all education funding sources, except capital sources. We are anxious to see what regulations the State Board of Education adopts to clarify the details of these fiscal provisions. The subject of business services will be a major focus for our planning grant. It is where we need the most direction and support. We have contacted Eric Premack (author of *Charter School Development Guide*) to advise us on consultant support in our planning year. He will be very helpful in referring us to on-line resources, workshops and offering support at critical stages of our design process.

### **3. Collaboration and Networking Strategies**

#### **→Areas of collaboration within the school**

In order to put all the pieces of an extremely sophisticated "program puzzle" together, we have identified time within the school day to continue the breadth and depth of our mission. The staff meets on a daily basis for the purpose of data analysis, critical inquiry, research-based dialogues, etc. Sherman Oaks staff are receiving ongoing professional development in action-research that builds their capacity to use their classroom as a "living lab." Teachers develop an inquiry question, collect evidence, and analyze that evidence to change instructional practices. "Plan-do-reflect" is a cycle of learning both staff and students follow. We are learning how to complete the cycle of inquiry which will produce best first practices for all students. A study in Australia has shown that overburdened teacher leaders are likely to "live off past preparation" when teaching their own students in order to accommodate additional leadership responsibilities. We intend to consciously organize our school around time-related factors. We feel that the manipulation of time is a dependent variable in the successful implementation of our reform efforts. Our teaching staff go above-and-beyond the tyranny of time. Our 90-minute mid-day block which gives staff common preparation time is a priority. While we take the role of teacher leader seriously, we must protect the role of *teacher* just as seriously.

#### **→Collective knowledge and experience of partnerships**

Sharing our school site are two unique partners: a *Community Center* serving senior citizens that was funded by a \$650,000 grant from the *City of San Jose* and a county preschool program home to 350 youngsters. Both programs will promote opportunities for exceptional cross-generational interactions, particularly with senior citizens who have long since lost contact with public schools. Services at the Community Center will include an after-school recreation program for school-age children, the senior citizen program during school hours, and potentially a middle school program in the late afternoon and an adult education program during the evening. We have been selected by Willard Daggett's *International Center for Leadership in Education* as a model site for rigorous and relevant learning--learning that requires application to real-life settings. We will present our work at the *Model Schools Conference* in Atlanta, Georgia during the summer of 1998. Consultants from this Center visited our campus four times during 1997-98

to collaborate with us and support our efforts on creating a constructivist curriculum for all students. San Jose State University uses our site as their *Professional Development School*. This partnership has three main purposes: (1) to prepare aspiring teachers, (2) to support first and second year teachers, and (3) to help professional teachers be effective school leaders. We work together with the university to select teacher preservice candidates, to select master teachers who work with the teacher candidates, to develop coursework, and to assess teaching performance of the student teachers. The principal of Sherman Oaks teaches the *School and Community* course for the Master's program students. We host the district's *Professional Development Center* and offer interactive video opportunities for teachers in training. The *Noyce Foundation* has generously donated \$30,000 to us this year for our literacy initiative. The *Walter Johnson Foundation* donated \$20,000 and *Quantum Corporation* gave \$10,000. We are a Bay Area Reform Leadership School funded at \$125,000 per year to carry out reform activities to ensure powerful learning for all students. In addition, *Noyce* sponsored one staff member for Literacy Coordinator training at Ohio State University and sent our core staff to Early Literacy Training--an intensive year of theory, practice, coaching and reflection. Our relationships with *PACT* and *Partners in School Innovation* (see description below) are the cornerstone for building a strong partnership with our parent community. We have connected with our local community college and high school, both providing mentors and tutors to our students. The high school students, in turn, receive course credit in child development, and the college students receive course credit in either early childhood education or community service. Our partnerships continue to fuel the transformation of our dreams into realities. We do not intend to be a castle in our community. Within the challenges and complexities of these postmodern times, we must find better ways to work with others in the interests of the children they know best. We are inventing our sense of professionalism so that it does not place us above or apart from parents and the public. When we work closely with those outside the school for the benefit of our students within the school, all will be benefit.

### →*External means of technical support*

Armed with an inclusive philosophy, we have a commitment to organizing our school around strong partnerships: with parents, the community, the district, and other schools. A key partner in helping us find new ways to reach parents is *People Acting in Community Together (PACT)*. *PACT*'s model is to reach out to our community using one-to-one visits and to carefully listen to their concerns, hopes, and dreams of our constituents. Our campaign to build relationships with the community has helped lay the foundation for our success. Last year, the core team of teachers who were hired early in this project were trained by *PACT* to conduct the one-on-one visits. We set appointments and fanned out into the community, meeting with our future families--listening to their vision for a model school. A second partnership that strengthens our bonds with parents is *Partners In School Innovation*, an *AmeriCorps* program. They are a national service program that has placed a team of three trained staff with Sherman Oaks for five years. The goal of *Partners in School Innovation* is to help us develop, implement, and institutionalize important projects to meet school priorities around community and parent involvement. In addition, we are a member of the *Charter School Leadership Network* through the *Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory* in Portland, Oregon and attend workshops offered by the *California Network of Educational Charters*.

### →*Involvement of parents and community members*

After three months of conducting a Needs Assessment with our staff, students, and parents, the *AmeriCorps* team developed both long-term goals and short-term projects--all of which will ultimately lead to higher student empowerment and achievement. Their goals cover parents, staff and students: *Parents will:* (1) be empowered to collaborate with teachers to meet the social and academic needs of their children, and (2) participate actively in leadership committees representing all populations of the school. *Teachers/staff will:* (1) utilize a multi-cultural/equitable curriculum in classrooms, and (2) collaborate with parents in meeting the social/academic needs of every child. *Students will:* (1) be high achieving and active in their learning process, and (2) be culturally sensitive and socially aware.

In addition to the *AmeriCorps* projects, we offer a variety of opportunities for parents and community members to become comfortable with our school and involved in the educational process. We have three Parent Information Evenings during which each teacher meets with the parents from that classroom and sketches out the next 12-week unit of study explaining how and when parents can get involved, particularly how parents can extend the learning beyond the school day. We have three Student Exhibition Evenings where parents and community are invited to share in the culmination of that unit of study--our last Exhibition had an 80% parent turnout! We have hosted socials and festivals that attracted hundreds of parents, neighbors and children. We offer educational forums such as Application Learning and Conflict Management Techniques. ESL and SSL classes for parents of children in our Dual Immersion Program meet two evenings a week. *Partners in Print*, a literacy workshop, and *Positive Parenting workshops* are underway and well attended. Our school sponsors a float which we enter in parades as far away as San Francisco. Children, parents, and staff ride the float together, having fun and getting to know each other. We have a Governance Council of 21 members and a Bilingual Advisory Council of 16 members that meet monthly to address our program. All meetings are conducted in Spanish and English. We hope to blend traditional and nontraditional avenues of parent involvement for a powerful and united learning community that will do whatever it takes to keep our eyes and heart on the needs of *all* children who walk through our gates.

## 4. Overall Program Evaluation

### →*A comprehensive assessment program*

Assessment as learning can and should be an exciting and highly valued component of any educational system. The word *assessment* is derived from the Latin word *assidere*: to sit with. It conjures up images of teachers observing students, talking with them, and working with them to unravel their understandings and their misunderstandings--transforming assessment into an integral part of learning that offers detailed feedback to the teacher and student. But, clearly we cannot ignore the demand for accountability by the public. Test scores can form the starting point for accountability, but we aim to combine our qualitative and quantitative measures to look forward and inform ourselves and our community about current performance and identify areas of improvement. By producing multiple measures: standardized test scores, performance tasks, holistic reading, writing and mathematics assessments, attendance data, disciplinary data (suspensions, referrals), developmental report cards, and professional portfolios developed by teachers using action research to guide their work -- we can produce an accountability framework to satisfy all stake-holders.

**→Outline of measurements used to evaluate success of charter program**

After reviewing different resources, we liked the clear and straightforward approach taken in Massachusetts:

1. Is the academic program a success? An affirmative answer would be based on evidence that the school has made reasonable progress in meeting internally established goals over four years, and that student performance significantly improved and/or is persistently strong on internal and external academic assessments.
2. Is the school a viable organization? Answering yes would mean that the school is financially solvent and stable, enrollment is stable and near capacity, school governance is sound, and professional staff are competent and resourceful.
3. Is the school faithful to the terms of its charter? If the school's program and operation are consistent with the terms of its charter, and if the school is within the bounds of essential statutory and regulatory requirements, then the answer will be yes.

The assessment data that allows us to arrive at a simple "yes" or "no" answer will be comprehensive: attendance, parental satisfaction, safety and order, school tone, staff development, etc. The accountability contract describes the measures the school uses to document its progress toward those objectives, including credible student assessment tools for annually tracking student performance.

**C. Support for Getting the Charter School Petition Circulated and Approved**

**1. Specific Activities and Work to Be Done**

**→Work that assists in meeting the required 14 elements**

**→Activities and strategies for the charter approval process**

**→Strategies for recruiting students**

We have spent the last three years planning this school in consort with our community. As described in #3 above, the staff of Sherman Oaks contacted parents one-by-one and asked them to share their vision for our program. We held community forums attended by over 150 people, giving and receiving input on our program design, schedule, activities, curriculum, instruction, building design, etc. With this foundation in place, it will be easy to set up a similar process to coherently address the required 14 elements and to circulate and get the charter petition approved. We will set up a Charter Planning Committee who will take responsibility for framing questions and researching information pertaining to the 14 elements. One-on-one contacts and community forums will be set up after the research has been conducted. These dialogue meetings will allow parents and community members the opportunity to ask questions and give their input so a final charter draft can be composed. Once our Governance Council has adopted the charter petition, a signature drive will follow. Recruiting students is no problem -- we will continue to be a neighborhood school serving the children and families that currently attend Sherman Oaks -- and add children as possible. We have held a waiting list since last year for families wanting to transfer their children to our school.

**2. Justification for Use of Grant Funds**

**→How grant funds will be used to fulfill educational vision and effective school variables**

**→How grant funds will be used to support petition approval activities**

The grant funds will be used to fund a half-time Planning Coordinator facilitating the different activities proposed in the time-line. The Coordinator will work with the numerous parents and

staff members on the Charter Planning Committee. The Coordinator will help disseminate information about the planning grant, coordinate the extensive research to be conducted, and schedule the community forums. Through community forums and conducting a grass-roots campaign of one-on-one contacts, we will garner community support. All current staff members are in favor of pursuing charter school status as is our Governance Council. Money will be set aside to fund mandatory evaluation activities with the CDE.

**→How grant funds will be used to support research activities**

Our research will most certainly require expert advice. At least two local organizations are available to provide this support: the *Nonprofit Development Center of San Jose* and the *Charter Schools Development Center* at the *Institute for Education Reform* at California State University, Sacramento. We have contacted both organizations who are available to provide resource support and expert guidance. We would like to visit conversion sites as logistically feasible.

### **III. SELF-ASSESSMENT AND PROCEDURES FOR MONITORING PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION OF THE CHARTER PROPOSAL**

**→Evaluation of the quality of the charter proposal itself**

The 14 required charter elements, once fully developed, will be submitted for review by a mentor charter school (to be determined through our research and charter school network participation), by our parent community and by our governance committee. At that point, the charter school petition will be taken to the Campbell Union School District Board of Trustees.

**→Timeline for completion of specific tasks**

**→Procedure for evaluating quality of work**

**→Adherence to required evaluations of the grant**

**→Process for how the grant money will be spent**

Summer 1998-Fall 1998

- Research groups comprised of staff and parents will divide up the 14 elements of the charter school petition:
  - (1) develop essential questions probing those elements
  - (2) locate resources available to address those questions
- Identify one key member of the organizational team to represent the school at the required evaluation meetings and to serve as the key contact (Planning Coordinator).
- Set up budget advisory committee to provide budget oversight for the duration of the grant period.

Fall 1998 - Winter 1999

- The research groups will locate appropriate resources (workshops, books, articles, consultants) and compose descriptions of the 14 elements.

Spring - Summer 1999

- A series of community forums will be scheduled to review and revise the petition draft.
- The draft will be submitted to a sister charter school for a quality review.
- The governance committee of the school will approve the final draft.
- The petition will be circulated for staff signatures.
- A petition will be filed with the District's Board of Trustees for action.

